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**'Collective traumas,' like war and natural disasters, viewed on television may have long-lasting mental and physical health effects: study**

**Researchers at UC Irvine revealed that exposure to traumatic images on the news could lead to post-traumatic stress symptoms over time. Those watching four hours of day of TV news coverage after 9/11 and the start of the Iraq War were more likely to report physical health problems in the years following exposure.**

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Graphic, explicit images of traumatic events have been shown in a study to cause symptoms of post-traumatic strees disorder.

When natural disasters and traumatic events strike, subjecting yourself to a steady diet of graphic media images can make you both stressed out and sick.

Researchers at UC Irvine in California studied news-viewing habits following "collective traumas," such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks, and found that repeated exposure to graphic media images may have long-lasting mental and physical health consequences.

In an assessment of more than 1,300 participants, those who watched more than four hours a day of TV news coverage in the weeks after 9/11 and the start of the Iraq War reported acute and post-traumatic stress symptoms over time. In addition, they were more likely to report physical health problems two to three years later.

"I would not advocate restricting nor censoring war images for the psychological well-being of the public," said study lead Roxane Cohen Silver. "Instead, I think it's important for people to be aware that there is no psychological benefit to repeated exposure to graphic images of horror."

"The results suggest that exposure to graphic media images may be an important mechanism through which the impact of collective trauma is dispersed widely," Silver says. "Our findings are both relevant and timely as vivid images reach larger audiences than ever before through YouTube, social media and smartphones."

Funded by the National Science Foundation, the study appears in a forthcoming issue of Psychological Science. Earlier this year, Israeli researchers published a study that found that exposure to media coverage of terrorist missile attacks increases pain levels in people already suffering from chronic pain.

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